

Unpacking Constant Connectivity: A Systematic Review of Its Outcomes and Motivational Pathways

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Abstract

The availability requirements and individuals' need to stay connected through work devices have contributed to an 'always-on' culture of constant connectivity, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. While past studies have typically conceptualised constant connectivity as a behavioural phenomenon, they have overlooked the psychological state/experience associated with today's 24/7 connected work environment. Therefore, this study aims to (a) clarify the conceptual ambiguity surrounding constant connectivity, (b) examine its antecedents and outcomes in relation to autonomous and controlled motivation, and (c) assess its impact on employee well-being. A systematic review was conducted in accordance with PRISMA guidelines. This review proposes a theory-driven definition of constant connectivity and reframes the existing unidimensional construct into a two-dimensional construct—connectivity behaviour and psychological state—for greater conceptual clarity. The antecedents and outcomes of autonomous and controlled motivation for connectivity are also subsequently outlined.

Keywords

Constant connectivity, employee well-being, mobile devices, motivation and systematic literature review.

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, different means and methods for work connectivity have been tested and adopted due to advances in mobile technology (Baurai et al. 2025). The rise in hybrid work design, after-hours work, and the growing ability of technological devices (such as laptops, smartphones, iPads, and tablets) have led to constant connectivity to work beyond regular work hours (Smollan et al. 2024). Technology continues to influence the ever-evolving work ecology (Wajcman and Rose 2011) and employee after-hours work connectivity behaviour (Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011). The global smartphone user base is expected to grow steadily between 2024 and 2029. Notably, the number of smartphone users has grown consistently over the past years and is expected to reach its peak in 2029 (Statista 2025). This explains the diffusion and integration of smartphones and communication technology into our daily work lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has further enhanced this practice, making organisations more dependent on technology and encouraging extended work hours (van Zoonen et al. 2021). Due to extended work hour expectations and the

demand for constant connectivity, employees often work from home beyond their regular work hours. They may also engage in after-hours work because of peer and organisational expectations (Belkin et al. 2020) and personal ambition (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan 2007). The normalisation of after-hours connectivity and extension of work hours beyond the contracted work hours has also forced legislators in a few countries to introduce laws on 'right to disconnect' (Schlachter et al. 2018). For example, in France, Spain, and Australia (Martin et al. 2022). Therefore, such legislative actions have fueled more discussion globally on constant connectivity and employee' right to safeguard their time beyond the contracted work hours.

Recent studies suggest individuals remain connected to work because of career aspirations, a strong sense of work purpose (Pitacho and Cordeiro 2023), preference for multi-tasking (Howard and Cogswell 2023) and managing other non-work demands during work, resulting in after-hours connectivity (Magni et al. 2023). This increase in work flexibility has allowed individuals to achieve more due to their ability to control their work schedules, better manage non-work demands, leading to higher productivity and greater organisational identification (Yue 2022). On the contrary, the normative expectations for connectivity can be attributed to organisational expectations, extended work availability, requirements for instant response, and increased working hours (Buchler et al. 2018). These expectations can increase work stress and reduce employee well-being (Becker et al. 2021). Furthermore, the mobile work devices and communication technology's ability to remain connected to one's work at any time and from anywhere has offered employees greater autonomy. However, it also interrupts employees with incoming messages, calls, and emails at any time and from anywhere, leading to a feeling of reduced autonomy (ten Brummelhuis et al. 2021). This opposing effect is termed the paradoxical effect of technology (Piszczyk, 2017) or the 'technology paradox' (ten Brummelhuis et al. 2021), as well as the empowerment/enslavement paradox (Schlachter et al. 2018). Zhang et al. (2023) made a critical note of after-hours connectivity as a 'double-edged sword' and Schlachter et al. (2018) as a 'black box'. On one hand, remaining constantly connected through excessive use of mobile devices can contribute to poor well-being indicators (Tarafdar et al. 2007). On the other hand, few studies have identified connectivity as a resource that leads to higher job satisfaction (Yin et al. 2024) and productivity (Kolb et al. 2012; Schlachter et al. 2018). These studies suggest contradictory opinions and mixed results.

1.1 Gaps Identified in the Past Reviews

Several gaps were identified in the previous review studies. First, the proliferation of constructs related to work connectivity and the absence of a clear definition have created ambiguity in conceptualising constant connectivity, highlighting the need to verify its conceptual uniqueness (Hu et al. 2021; Schlachter et al. 2018). Second, Thorel et al. (2022) called for studies to understand the relationship between availability expectations from the organisation (controlled) and availability behaviour (autonomous). Third, there is a need for studies to understand the representation of constant connectivity beyond frequency and duration, and its impact on EWB (Schoellbauer et al. 2023). Fourth, Hu et al. (2021) suggest that studies should investigate motivational processes through the lens of self-determination theory in the context of work connectivity. A detailed summary of recent reviews examining the relationship between work connectivity and employee well-being (EWB) is presented in Table 1. Based on the limitations identified through this exercise, we believe that a systematic literature review supported by critical conceptual analysis is timely and can help address the research questions outlined below. It is also important to specify why we have not performed the meta-analysis: differences in measurement scales and heterogeneity of measurement variables could affect the comparability of the results (Schoellbauer et al. 2023; Thorel et al. 2022).

1.2 Research Questions

1. What constitutes constant connectivity, and how can its conceptual boundaries be clarified?
2. What is the role of autonomous and controlled motivation in the context of constant connectivity, and how does this affect employee well-being (EWB)?
3. What are the differences in the antecedents and outcomes of constant connectivity driven by autonomous and controlled motivation?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To provide conceptual clarity about the definition and scope of constant connectivity.
2. To explore the role of motivation (autonomous vs. controlled) for constant connectivity, and its impact on EWB.
3. To analyse the differences in their antecedents and outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Constant or ubiquitous connectivity refers to employees' constant availability for work through mobile work devices,

Table 1. Summary of recent reviews that studied the relationship between connectivity to work beyond work-hours and employee well-being (EWB).

Sl no	Author(s) & Year of Pub.	Aims & Objectives	Limitations	Type of review
1	Baumeister et al. (2021)	To meta-analytically review the literature on the relationship between ICT use and employees' well-being (burnout and engagement).	ICT use is related to constant connectivity, but not conceptually the same; only two well-being indicators were studied.	Meta-analysis
2	Berg-Beckhoff et al. (2017)	To review studies that have researched the relationship between ICT and stress and burnout, considering age as an effect modifier.	This review focused on technostress, a psychological experience, rather than constant connectivity.	Systematic literature review
3	Hu et al. (2021)	To develop a taxonomy of ICT-related constructs by integrating stress and motivation theories.	This review does not add conceptual clarity to the concept of constant connectivity or its definition.	Conceptual taxonomy review
4	Lunde et al. (2022)	To assess the evidence for associations between telework from home (TWFH) and health-related outcomes in employed office workers.	This review focused on teleworkers whose job contracts differ from those of regular employees.	Systematic literature review
5	Schlachter et al. (2018)	To identify themes on voluntary work-related technology use in existing research.	This review focused only on voluntary work-related technology use between January 1992 and March 2014.	Systematic narrative review
6	Schoellbauer et al. (2023)	To analyse different implications of the frequency and the duration of extended technology-based work on workers' wellbeing.	This review has restricted its analysis to measures such as frequency and duration.	Systematic literature review
7	Thörel et al. (2022)	To examine the associations between work-related extended availability and criteria of employee recuperation, well-being, private life and work.	The review was on extended availability. The constructs were not homogeneous, and findings were based on studies with high statistical heterogeneity.	Meta-analysis
8	Wang et al. (2020)	This review focuses on work design to explore how ICT influences employees' effectiveness and well-being.	The primary focus was on work design (job demands, job autonomy, and relational aspects).	Conceptual review

even outside of regular working hours (Buchler et al. 2020; Mazmanian 2013). Prior studies have conceptualised connectivity along a continuum, ranging from hypo to hyper, with requisite and optimal connectedness as intermediate states (Kolb et al. 2012). These states of connectedness may have various organisational contexts, individual aspirations and values. Self-determination theory (SDT) provides a framework for understanding the relationship between work motivation, well-being, and performance (Ryan and Deci 2000; Ten Brummelhuis et al. 2021). It identifies three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Van den Broeck et al. 2016). Autonomy refers to control over one's work and actions; competence relates to mastery and confidence leading to task success; and relatedness concerns feeling connected to and valued by others. After-hours connectivity may simultaneously address these needs by enabling autonomy and competence in managing work and sustaining relatedness with colleagues. SDT also distinguishes between autonomous and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation reflects self-determination, agency, and ownership, whereas controlled motivation is guided by external

pressures such as rewards, punishments, or social approval (Ryan and Deci 2000; Ohly and Latour 2014). This review examines how these motivational orientations drive constant connectivity and shape employee well-being.

2.1 Conceptual Boundaries - Constant Connectivity

In this systematic review, our conceptual breadth of constant connectivity is sufficiently wide to encompass the conceptualisation and operationalisation of as many studies as possible. For example, a) availability for work after-hours or extended availability, b) studies that have represented after-hours connectedness through the use of ICT, work devices, work contact and monitoring emails that have blurred the work-home boundaries and their impact on EWB. Literature on telepressure is excluded because its definition is based on a feeling of preoccupation with ICT messages and an overwhelming urge to respond (Barber and Santuzzi 2015), suggesting that telepressure is more of a psychological experience than an individual's behaviour or a state of connectedness.

Further, we have not considered the entire literature on “technostress” as it is a very broad concept. Tarafdar et al. (2007) defined technostress as a phenomenon of stress arising from an inability to cope with the demands of organisational computer use. Tarafdar et al. (2007) developed a theoretical framework of technostress comprising five components: techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty. Constant connectivity after work hours is a subset of technostress, and including the entire technostress literature might divert us from our main research questions. We have also not considered the literature on night shift workers and freelancers, as their work contracts may differ from the contracts of regular employees.

2.2 Employee well-being

Well-being is a broad concept that encompasses a person's state of happiness, and, in succinct terms, it is optimal functioning (Gable and Haidt 2005). Our study is related to EWB, which describes employees' feelings of happiness stemming from a sense of fulfilment and security. In the work context, well-being is often associated with performance, i.e., task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, and counterproductive work behaviour (Page and Vella-Brodrick 2009). Several outcomes that explain EWB include an employee's quality of life, psychological status at work (Siegrist et al. 2007), work satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion (Vanhala and Tuomi 2006). This background literature has highlighted that job performance is a critical component of overall well-being, but it extends beyond it (Tay et al. 2023). In this review, both work-related and non-work-related well-being outcomes will be considered. Our purpose in drawing the conceptual boundaries of constant connectivity and EWB under the lens of SDT is to set the right premise for studying this relationship.

3. Method

The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines were used to conduct this systematic literature review. Studies for the systematic review were identified by searching four databases: Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost Business Ultimate, and PsycINFO. Later, we employed the ancestry and descendancy approach to ensure that no significant studies were left out (Thorel et al. 2022).

3.1 Search Strategy

The primary search terms were “constant connectivity”, “mobile device”, and “employee well-being”. The relevant synonyms of these terms were used along with “AND” and “OR” operators to reach the breadth and depth of the literature. The search strategy codes for the various databases have been prepared. Due to word limitations, they could not be included in the manuscript; however, they can be made available upon request.

3.2 Selection Process

The records collected from the above-mentioned databases using relevant search terms were cleaned using inclusion-exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria: a) the paper was based on empirical data, b) published between January 2007 and April 2024, and c) the paper investigated the relationship between after-hours ICT/mobile device use or constant connectivity and employee well-being. We had two reasons for selecting 2007 as the starting year. Firstly, the equivalent terms of “constant connectivity”, such as “constant contact” and “constant connection,” were first used in their study by Porter and Kakabadse (2006). However, the term “constant connectivity” in management studies was first used in Wajcman and Rose's (2011) study. Secondly, smartphones (including iPhone and Android systems) were introduced to the market after 2007-2008 (Arthur 2012). Our exclusion criteria were: a) papers published in conference proceedings, symposia, workshops, or seminars, b) grey literature, e.g., a technical report, dissertations, c) the paper was not written in English, and d) books, or book chapters, commentaries, editorials, pilot studies and study protocols.

Firstly, duplicates were removed using EndNote 21 software by comparing authors' names, year of publication, DOI, paper title, and volume number. A total of 184 duplicates were removed, 174 using EndNote and 10 manually by following the above three steps. Secondly, the titles, abstracts, keywords, hypotheses, and research questions were read and analysed for screening and to verify the articles' relevance to the study's objectives. This technique identified and excluded 404 journal articles, 20 book chapters, 13 dissertations, one encyclopaedia, one non-English record, one commentary and two study protocols. Finally, 20 journal articles were selected for full-text reading, out of which a total of eight articles were selected for the review and analysis. Further, we performed the ancestry and descendancy approach. By performing *ancestry analysis* in July 2024, 634 records were identified from the reference section of the eight selected articles. Of these, 403 records were peer-reviewed journal articles. A total of 71 duplicates were found by EndNote. Three additional articles matched our original screened records downloaded from four databases, bringing the total to 332 journal articles. After the screening of 332 articles, 32 articles were subjected to full-text reading. The *Descendancy approach* was performed in October 2024. We collected 337 records from Google Scholar that cited our previously selected eight articles. Out of these 337 records, 200 were journal articles, and only 186 were published in English. 13 duplicates were detected by EndNote, and one was detected manually. Additionally, five articles matched our previous records (four from databases' records and one from ancestry records). One of the articles was a retracted article. Therefore, 166 articles were screened, out of which 21 articles were selected for full-text reading. We performed a descendancy search again on 1 April 2025 to check for any fresh articles that have cited our originally selected 8 articles. As a result, three studies were identified and included. A summary of all 54 articles has been prepared. Due to word limitations, it could not be included in the manuscript; however, it can be made available upon request.

3.3 Quality Assessment

After conducting the full-text reading, we found that the only article in our screened pool on the framework of controlled and autonomous motivation was by Ohly and Latour (2014), which was also highlighted by Hu et al. (2021). Therefore, we conducted an additional ancestry and descendancy approach on this article to gain more understanding of this framework and found two relevant articles. The quality assessment was conducted for 75 articles (20 from databases, 32 identified through ancestry searching, 21 through the descendancy approach, and 2 descendants of Ohly and Latour, 2014). A table summarising the quality check has been prepared. It can be made available to the reviewers upon request. The quality check was conducted using the quality criteria developed by Dybå and Dingsøyr (2008), which were designed based on the criteria used for the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP). Through this step, it was ensured that only high-quality studies adhering to standard research practices were included. While appraising the articles, eleven criteria were used to determine the quality of reporting, rigour, credibility and relevance. Following this quality assessment, we have selected 8 articles from the databases, 30 from the ancestry approach and 16 from the descendancy approach. Therefore, 54 articles were included in our final analysis, with 60 studies, as depicted in Figure 1 of the PRISMA flowchart.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview of Studies

This review comprises the analysis of 54 articles- 60 studies, including 47 quantitative, 6 qualitative, and 1 conceptual. Among the 60 studies, 36 were cross-sectional (60%), 8 were longitudinal (13.33%), 7 were longitudinal dairy studies (11.66%), 6 were qualitative studies (10%), 1 involved an experimental vignette, and 1 was a conceptual study. A few studies (Cheung 2022; Piszczek 2017; Ragsdale and Hoover 2016; Yin et al. 2024) have maintained a time gap of a few weeks in data collection (T2 for the dependent variable only, while T1 for all other variables). The majority of studies were conducted in Europe and North America (66.67%), with the highest concentration in the USA and Germany. The remaining studies were conducted in East Asia (15%) and Oceania (5.00%). Most studies have used age, gender and working hours as control variables.

4.2 Conceptualisation of Constant Connectivity

The breadth of literature reviewed made us aware of diverse conceptualisations of connectivity to work. The notion of *constant connectivity* was first introduced by Wajcman and Rose (2011) and later critically examined by Kolb et al. (2012). They contested connectivity as a *state* (degree or intensity) rather than it being 'constant'. It is argued that due

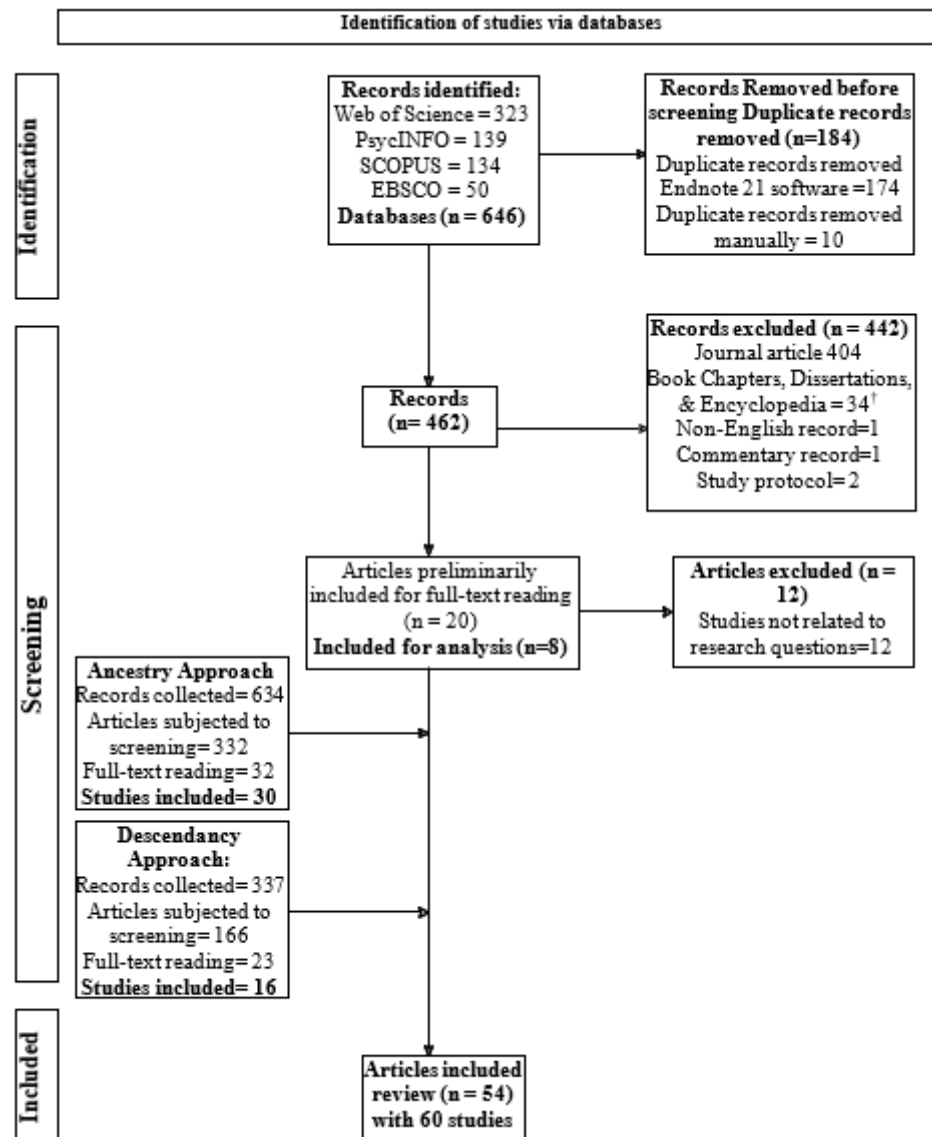


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart for the systematic literature review.

Book chapters, dissertations, and encyclopedia entries were included in the PsycInfo download, as these records could not be excluded.

to external interruptions, intentional breaks, sleep or agentic actions, connectivity cannot be ‘constant’. Within this view, they distinguish hypo-connectivity (below threshold), hyper-connectivity (excessive and often harmful), requisite connectivity (meeting threshold), and optimal connectivity (balanced and effective). While establishing the theoretical background, we referred to a recent definition of constant connectivity as employees’ continuous availability for work after hours via mobile devices (Buchler et al. 2020). Complementing this view, van Zoonen et al. (2023), building on Richardson and Benbunan-Fich (2011), conceptualised after-hours connectivity as a behaviour. Together, these perspectives capture constant connectivity as either a ‘state of connectedness’ or an ‘act or behaviour’ of an individual (Buchler et al. 2020; van Zoonen et al. 2023). In the post-COVID-19 context, the ‘state of connectedness’—where employees remain connected through work devices but may or may not actively respond to work communications—may be particularly relevant, as remote work resources have expanded and after-hours connectivity is increasingly reinforced by organisational expectations and individual orientations (Tautz et al. 2024).

Studies have examined the use of ICT, smartphones, or work devices outside work hours to investigate connectivity to work (Gadeyne et al. 2018; Jiang et al. 2022; Zhang et al. 2023). Particularly, the study by Ohly and Latour (2014) stands out due to the framework used by the authors to examine the contrasting influence of autonomous and controlled motivations on evening smartphone use for work and its effect on well-being. Here, autonomous motivation is associated with personal values, aspirations, or enjoyment, while controlled motivation arises from external rewards or fear of negative consequences. Buchler et al. (2020) define constant connectivity as a construct influenced by organisational antecedents, such as social pressure, communication practices, and occupational identity. However, it explicitly does not articulate constant connectivity as an individual behaviour, which has been suggested by other studies. Additionally, other organisational antecedents (external) such as work device distribution, subjective norms (Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011) and organisational expectations (Piszczyk 2017) were found to have a strong association with after-hours work-related technology use. Individual factors, such as personal ambition, job involvement (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan 2007), and polychronicity (Howard and Cogswell 2023; Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011), highlight the intrinsic aspects of constant connectivity. Therefore, it appears imperative to consider both the intrinsic and the extrinsic factors in the conceptualization of constant connectivity.

Furthermore, several studies have emerged with different frameworks in answering queries in different contexts and using different or similar premises. For example, work contact as a source of interruption (Arlinghaus and Nachreiner 2013; ten Brummelhuis et al. 2021), the interaction of daily mobile email use and autonomy paradox as a lived psychological experience (Mazmanian et al. 2013), daily smartphone use as a combination of behaviour and a psychological experience (Derks et al. 2016; J. Park et al. 2020), the effect of states or the extent of connectivity on efficiency (Kolb et al. 2012), and motivation as a source of connectivity (Ohly and Latour 2014). Conceptualising constant connectivity only as observable actions, while ignoring the experiential aspect of how individuals feel when engaging in these activities, amounts to capturing only part of the lived experience. Upon reviewing various definitions and conceptualizations of connectivity to work, greater conceptual clarity has emerged by encompassing both what individuals do and what they feel while doing so. We define *constant connectivity as a combination of behaviour and psychological experience, where behaviour involves sustained availability and use of work devices, while psychological experience reflects both cognitive awareness and affective states of being connected, driven by autonomous and controlled motivation.*

4.3 Operationalisations of Connectivity to Work

‘Frequency’ and ‘duration’ are observable actions that can directly measure the number of times employees use work devices or receive calls beyond work hours, or the length of time the work devices were used. Moreover, requirements for availability or response expectations are key drivers of connectivity that can operationalise the underlying factors as a latent construct (Farivar et al. 2024; Leppäkumpu et al. 2024). Moving beyond frequency and duration, many studies operationalised ‘organisational expectation’ to represent the perceived expectation that drives connectivity to work (Day et al. 2012; Derks et al. 2014; Dettmers 2017). Here, ‘expectation’ broadly means organisational or supervisor’s or peer expectations for work availability or response expectations to emails or other work-related calls and messages. Scales on connectivity to work have ranged from single-item measures across technologies (cell phones, email, voicemail, etc.; Boswell and Olson-Buchanan 2007; Butts et al. 2015; Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011) to multi-item approaches with a combination of frequency, duration, or expectation (Becker et al. 2021; Martin et al. 2022; Y. Park et al. 2020). Some studies have also included a few items on psychological experiences (Derks et al. 2016; J. Park et al. 2020), conceptually distinct from individual behaviour. Here, *psychological experience encompasses emotional, cognitive, and affective states that individuals undergo due to the ‘always-on’ culture of constant connectivity.*

Further, multi-item scales have directly measured connectivity to work (J. Park et al. 2020; Jiang et al. 2022; Y. Park et al. 2020), but without explicitly representing them as constant connectivity. The only scale explicitly developed and labelled as such is that of Buchler et al. (2020), which is driven by organisational antecedents and primarily captures connectivity behaviour. The operationalisation of constant connectivity, limited to observable actions, is the limitation we identified in the previous section. Connectivity also encompasses the psychological state of an individual while engaging in connectivity behaviour. For example, item 3 of Buchler and their colleagues’ scale suggests a psychological experience, ‘*Through my mobile work device, I know what awaits me at work before I get there*’, and item 2 used by Derks et al. (2016), ‘*Today, I felt obliged to respond to work-related messages during the evening hours*’. Therefore, we move beyond the point of conceptualising constant connectivity as an observable action by proposing it as a two-dimensional construct – a) individual behaviour and b) psychological experience/state. The two-

dimensional example is shown in Figure 2, borrowing the scale of Buchler et al. (2020) and the scale used by Derks et al. (2016).

4.4 Antecedents and Outcomes of Autonomous Motivation

Employees' willingness and commitment to remain available and connected to work beyond regular hours may result in individual connectivity behaviour. In this section, our attention will focus on autonomous motivation, which refers to engaging in an activity that is enjoyable, important, aligns with personal values, and is done out of personal choice (Ryan and Deci 2000). Therefore, it is believed to be self-determined rather than imposed by external pressures. Motivation to be *available* and *connected* for work after hours can be driven by the desire to improve relationships with managers, establish self-worth within the organisation, achieve higher performance, secure promotions, and pursue other aspirations (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan 2007; Fan et al. 2024). This autonomous motivation for connectivity to work can lead to individual connectivity behaviour (ICB) with both positive and negative spillovers. Khalid et al. (2022) and Li et al. (2025) extended this by distinguishing between after-hours proactive work connectivity (self-initiated) and reactive work connectivity (in response to instructions from the organisation), as well as their effects on well-being.

An individual's integration preference, which refers to how they balance their work and private life, and polychronicity, their preference for engaging in multiple tasks simultaneously, can motivate them to connect with

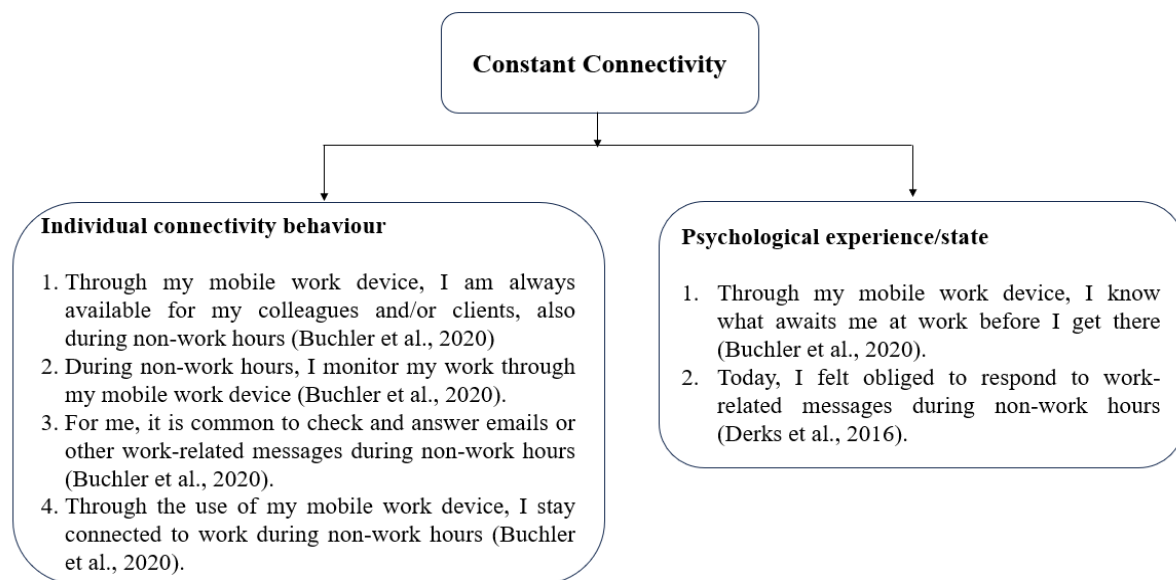


Figure 2. Constant Connectivity- as a two-dimensional construct based on the scale developed by Buchler et al. (2020) and the scale used by Derks et al. (2016).

work (Palm et al. 2020; Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011). Additionally, organisational resources such as the flexibility of communication technologies (Diaz et al. 2012; Farivar et al. 2024) and remote access to office resources (Dettmers et al. 2016a; Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011) help individuals manage work demands outside of work hours. It contributes to a feeling of higher motivation for connectivity at work, providing them with more autonomy and improved well-being (Mazmanian et al. 2013; van Zoonen et al. 2023). Further, autonomous motivation for connectivity, which is theoretically self-initiated, is associated with higher individual performance, promotions, and high work engagement (Baek et al. 2024; Ter Hoeven et al. 2016). However, it still affects employees' sleep quality and overall health through poor psychological detachment (Barber and Jenkins 2014), and it can also impact the emotions and attitudes of significant others or spouses (Ferguson et al. 2016).

Furthermore, the individual quest for connectivity driven by autonomous motivation can be facilitated when employees have autonomy over when, where, and how to work. High job autonomy due to after-hours connectivity can enhance well-being by reducing exhaustion (Zoonen et al. 2023). Additionally, connectivity can have an

autonomy-enhancing effect, which is typically linked to individual connectivity behaviour (ICB) (Li et al. 2025). Therefore, ICB can also be understood as an outcome of autonomous motivation, which has positive well-being outcomes. On the other hand, low job autonomy can exacerbate well-being as it can negatively affect due to high work contact (controlled motivation). Low autonomy negatively mediates the relationships between after-hours connectivity (*availability, work contact*) and well-being (e.g., start-of-day mood, sleep problems, distress) (Dettmers et al. 2016b; Schieman and Young 2013), due to the blurring of work-home boundaries. These mixed evidences underscore how job autonomy interacts with after-hours connectivity and well-being in a hyphenation of gain-loss pattern. At this point, the enabling and constraining effects of constant connectivity could be better theorised using the concept of the autonomy paradox, briefly discussed in the introduction section.

4.5 Antecedents and Outcomes of Controlled Motivation

Connectivity to work can occur due to external pressure, such as organisational expectations, supervisor, peer, or client expectations, as well as subjective norms, among many other reasons. In this section, we discuss the connectivity to work, which is driven by controlled motivation, its antecedents and outcomes. The antecedents of controlled motivation for constant connectivity can be availability requirements (Becker et al. 2021; Dettmers et al. 2016a), which function as a job demand (Day et al. 2012) and can have autonomy-diminishing effects (Li et al. 2025). Seminal work on job demands by Bakker et al. (2005) found that demands such as work overload, stress, time pressure, supervisor pressure, and negative work rumination impair health and increase the risk of job burnout. In contrast, resources can enhance well-being and performance, as discussed in the previous section.

The ‘always on culture’ in many organisations, especially following COVID-19, is a major concern that drives the need for controlled motivation through constant connectivity (Dettmers et al. 2016a; Hynes and Koc 2024). Supervisor and peer pressure for responsiveness establish connectivity that is externally driven (Becker et al. 2021; Buchler et al. 2020; Leppäkumpu and Sivunen 2024; Tautz et al. 2024). Such pressure and organisational demand have a conceptual link to controlled motivation. This can generate a fear of negative outcomes (Ohly and Latour 2014), affect employee health (Arlinghaus and Nachreiner 2013), drain mental energy, erode personal time, and reduce recovery opportunities (Braukmann et al. 2018). Subjective norms in the organisation are also found to be associated with constant connectivity after-hours, and it is clearly externally driven (Farivar et al. 2024; Palm et al. 2020; Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011), and even in different work groups, having different shared assumptions can develop or resist connectivity behaviour (Mazmanian 2013). Subjective norms may cross the work-home boundaries (Leppäkumpu and Sivunen 2024), particularly affecting those who prefer to separate their work and home life. They may feel violated due to constant connectivity, which can have a negative impact on their well-being (Piszczek 2017). The blurred work-home boundary has been most extensively studied within the framework of boundary theory. The violation of work-home boundaries due to organisational demands, such as the use of work devices at night, may increase the risk of insomnia (Y. Park et al. 2020), which in turn affects emotional exhaustion (Dettmers et al. 2016a). Such excessive connectivity (including after hours, weekends, and holidays) also extends to vacations, where work-related smartphone use predicts higher stress (Chen et al. 2018).

5. Discussion

In this study, we critically analysed the existing understanding of constant connectivity, its limitations and the constructs that have closely represented and operationalised it. The objectives of this review were to provide conceptual clarity regarding the definition and scope of constant connectivity and to identify different motivations (autonomous vs. controlled) for constant connectivity, their antecedents, and their impact on EWB.

5.1 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

This systematic literature review has several theoretical contributions to the literature on constant connectivity and employee well-being. *Firstly*, this review departs from the current literature and proposes a fresh theory-driven definition of constant connectivity. The definition extends the theoretical boundaries of self-determination theory and will encourage further discussion on the motivational aspects of connectivity at work. This argument is consistent with the qualitative work of Mazmanian et al. (2013), where they underscore the ‘always on’ state of the Blackberry users, suggesting connectivity both as a behaviour and psychological experience and ‘always on’ culture among white-collar workers as illustrated by Dettmers et al. (2016a). Secondly, the existing unidimensional construct of constant connectivity (Buchler et al. 2020) is conceptualised as a two-dimensional construct- individual behaviour and psychological state/experience. This distinction is important because connectivity is both expressed in observable actions (such as work device use and availability) and experienced as a psychological state (cognitive awareness and

a feeling of obligation), as noted in the studies of Mazmanian et al. (2013) and Ter Hoeven et al. (2016). Thirdly, this review complements and extends the identification and implications of antecedents and outcomes of constant connectivity driven by autonomous and controlled motivation (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan 2007; Palm et al. 2020; Richardson and Benbunan-Fich 2011).

This study also has practical implications for managers and practitioners. Firstly, this review guides managers on the role of motivation in constant connectivity. Autonomously motivated workers who engage in connectivity after hours can manage their work, improve communication through work devices, and reduce emotional exhaustion (van Zoonen et al. 2023). Secondly, to mitigate the negative effects of organizational expectations for connectivity, developing segmentation tactics such as turning off work device notifications and reducing the frequency of work contact may be good practices for improving psychological detachment, increasing recovery time, and improving well-being (Farivar et al. 2024; Y. Park et al. 2020). Thirdly, higher after-hours connectivity may lead to higher work-family conflict (Butts et al. 2015; Khalid et al. 2022), withdrawal behaviour (Lanaj et al. 2014), and turnover intentions (Ferguson et al. 2016). Therefore, managers may want to optimise or lower their employees' after-hours connectivity to reduce the employees' intentions to leave the organisation.

5.2 Directions for Future Research

This review highlights several areas for future research. Firstly, the psychological state/experience is a two-item sub-dimension of constant connectivity, as illustrated in Figure 2. Therefore, this scale can be tested and refined to better capture the broader meaning of the construct and improve predictive validity. Future research could design additional items, including both positive and negative psychological experiences. This conceptualisation of the scale will tap into the psychological experience/state of constant connectivity, providing greater clarity on the outcomes. Secondly, the majority of studies have measured subjective or self-reported frequency or duration of mobile device use, except for Van Fossen et al. (2023), who used a smartphone app to study connectivity behaviour. We know less about the outcomes of connectivity based on the objective measurement of the duration and frequency of work device use. Therefore, future research should conduct studies that are more objective in behaviour measurement.

Thirdly, daily fluctuations in after-hours work device use can impact well-being indicators differently. The diary and experience sampling methods are suitable for capturing the daily gain or loss of resources, as per JDR theory, or for daily boundary-crossing events, as per boundary theory. Therefore, diary studies and the experience-sampling method are highly relevant to organisational behaviour research (Yue 2022). These methods help uncover the within-person variability in understanding after-hours connectivity and well-being, as daily mood and emotions depend on factors such as sleep patterns, 'time of day' (Butts et al. 2015), and 'day of the week' (Zhang et al. 2023), among others. Well-controlled intervention studies that systematically manipulate the characteristics of after-hours availability are also needed to strengthen causal interpretations (Dettmers et al. 2016a). Moreover, future research should employ more longitudinal research methods (Hynes and Koc 2024; Lutz et al. 2020) or experimental designs (Butts et al. 2015; Tautz et al. 2024) to identify causal relationships. Fourthly, Haar and Wilkinson (2024) demonstrated that the use of smart devices during non-work time impacts well-being through work-family conflict, with age serving as a moderator. Future research could extend this by examining how dimensions of technology use (frequency, duration) create strain across workers of different age groups (Van Fossen et al. 2023). It would be valuable to investigate potential gender-based differences and similarities in experiences of connectivity (Buchler et al. 2020; Glavin et al. 2011), while also assessing whether social support serves as a buffer against the depletion of personal resources associated with after-hours connectivity (Ghislieri et al. 2022; Magni et al. 2023; Yue 2022). Furthermore, as the majority of studies to date have been conducted in Europe and the USA, research from the Global South is encouraged to account for geographical and cultural variations.

6. Conclusion

This review extends the existing conceptual boundaries of constant connectivity and identifies areas where more attention is needed in the future. First, after a critical analysis of the conceptualisation of constant connectivity, we proposed a theory-driven definition of constant connectivity. Second, based on the seminal qualitative work and subsequent quantitative studies, we conceptualise constant connectivity as a two-dimensional construct- individual behaviour and psychological state/experience. Furthermore, a theory-driven analysis of the antecedents and outcomes of constant connectivity, along with controlled and autonomous motivation, provides theoretical clarity and implications for practitioners. Lastly, our review highlights the need to further refine and test the constant connectivity scale, study the moderating effect of different resources, and apply shortititudinal, diary, experience sampling, and

longitudinal methods to push theoretical boundaries further. We hope our review will provide significant direction to future researchers and contribute to the evolving topic of constant connectivity and employee well-being globally.

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